

## June 24, 2010 Teleconference on Eating Disorders and Anxiety – Amy’s Notes

Hello, my name is Amy. I’m a beautiful 26 year old girl who, like having a past job, I had an eating disorder for about 7 years...but I no longer work there. It started out so simple with the desire to be thin (as vanity) and ended up as a powerful, inner, self-loathing endless mental battle. I slowly began to lose not only my weight, but my reality, my mind, my friends as well as anything and everything that I cared and loved. Anorexia had 100% control of me. I was no longer Amy. I was an eating disorder, a lying, destructive, conniving eating disorder. The obsession I had with calories and cookbooks, the intense 4 hour runs at 1 in the morning, the 2 cans of Diet Pepsi that constituted as my only meal of the day, the evenings when I felt so deprived of food that I’d turn into a ravenous animal with absolutely no control and ate everything I saw, only to purge it all out. It was an out of body experience, a loss of control so intense that I CAN’T even imagine behaving that way now.

The eating disorder was there for me, protecting me from this uncontrollable world. It was my coping mechanism for handling my emotional distress of feeling unloved and unworthy. With the support of my mom I found therapy, structure, and hospitalization at St. Paul Hospitals Eating Disorder program. I basically lived there for 2 years. During that time I went through intense cognitive, behavioural, and group therapy, which was more difficult than riding an angry bull at the Calgary Stampede.

I worked hard and learned different tools to help me through times when I experienced anxiety over food, body image and everything else that scared or frightened me. And trust me, I know this anxiety all too well. Like when there was food in front of me that I KNEW I had to eat. It was for my health, it was to have a future and a life. Eating it was for my parents who were breaking down watching me wither away. So I ate it. ....now what.

I had thoughts like how much I hate mom and dad. THEY made me eat this. Omigod I just gained 10 lbs, I know it. How many calories was that, 300? Whatever, I’ll just get up at 1 in the morning again and exercise for another 4 hours. No one will know. Ugh, they’re trying to conform me into the lethargy of society, preventing me from being different and unique.

But Amy, look how proud mom and dad are for eating that meal. It’s ok, you’re doing the right thing. You cant live like this all your life. Look at yourself in the mirror, you’re miserable. I don’t care, I’d rather be miserable and skinny than happy and fat.

One thing I had to remember was that this eating disorder required so much of my will power and discipline to get into, I KNEW I had that same power and strength to get out.

### ***Ways I overcame anxiety issues***

- I found it’s important to ask yourself, “why am I anxious,” and find out if the answer is rational or not.
- Leave the room and that environment.
- Be busy. Do something, anything. By doing something you keep your mind off your anxiety. When I woke up in the morning, I started doing something right away, and kept busy all day. Cleaning the house, washing the dishes or working in the garden, and journaling helped to keep the anxiety at bay. I always helped my mom like dishes, vacuuming, folding laundry – because it was always available to do and I could do it anytime.

## June 24, 2010 Teleconference on Eating Disorders and Anxiety – Amy’s Notes

- Listen to audiobooks. I wasn’t always a reader. Audiobooks don’t have my thoughts to enhance and allow the anxiety to manifest within me. I know of other people who preferred soothing music. Silence wasn’t always the best for me, as the “bad thoughts” would easily enter.
- Plan ahead—idle time was always “danger” for me. I started volunteering at the SPCA – not for the reason that I have a yearning passion to save dogs, but because I literally had to do SOMETHING with my day. It also allowed me to leave the anxiety-driven environment.
- Talking about my anxieties -- to someone I trusted, like my mom. Talking about my anxieties and feelings often alleviated them and put them in the right proportions. You have to be honest though. There were times where I would break down and cry after eating – and talking this through with my mom gave me an objective insight to just how out of touch with reality I was. My mom gave me an objective insight to just how out of touch with reality I was.
- Mantras. If the anxiety was over what I had just eaten and the heaviness it had in my stomach, I would repeat, “this feeling will pass” and it eventually did. These type of mantras helped me get through this. All or nothing thinking with food- think, “there will always be more.” (*after eating only half of my plate*)
- Finding a supportive friend who is willing to take the day off with you. (*after taking a day off exercise*)
- Having someone there with me who was supportive and confirmed over and over and over that I was doing the right thing. ~Talking with someone supportive who was realistic and would say things such as, “I just ate that, am I fat now because of it?”

### **Apprehensive about meeting up with an old friend:**

- This was difficult for me because I was worried what they would think of me and my new healthy weight.
  - ~When they say, “you look good” – they really mean that I look good!
  - ~They are not ‘shocked’ at how ‘fat’ I’ve become, rather, they are relieved and proud of how much I’ve accomplished and battled to regain the weight.
  - ~If they DO think, “woah, Amy has been having too many donuts,” then who cares about them. They are ignorant, immature, and not worth my time and presence.